



## BLENDED COURSE CASE SUMMARIES



### Using a virtual bulletin board (Padlet) to build community

Assoc Prof Jonathan Shock



*Students introduce themselves to the rest of the class using Padlet in a large first-year course. This is one of several welcoming activities being used. The Padlet activity includes asking for one “strange fact” about yourself. The first-year Mathematics courses offer different curriculum pathways determined by the preparedness, requirements, and performance of students. With multiple pathways, diverse backgrounds, and different levels of student preparedness, this helps to understand the students’ experience from their point of view and be able to be responsive.*



#### ABOUT THE COURSE

- First year Mathematics course in the Science faculty;
- Students take a course in each semester;
- **Class size:** 650 students;
- **Session types:** Five lectures per week, weekly in-person tutorials, weekly online assignments and in-class tests;
- **Focuses on** fundamental ideas in differential calculus covering functions of one variable, limits, continuity and differentiation with applications, as well as formal proof methods.

#### ENABLE APPLIED

Jonathan has adopted a variety of approaches aimed at [Building Community Online](#) in a large first year mathematics course.

Jonathan makes quite unique use of a real-time collaborative web platform, [Padlet](#), which can be used to upload, organise, and share content to virtual bulletin boards called “padlets”. Jonathan created this open space to afford all students the opportunity to ask questions or make suggestions using the language with which they are most comfortable. Through this channel, the students’ feelings and perspectives become more visible, allowing the lecturers to more easily empathise with students in the process of teaching and learning. Padlets are used to elicit student responses on the content covered in the prior week. This encourages students to become more confident in asking questions so the lecturer could respond to the whole class. The lecturer is able to be responsive and adapt teaching, such as by providing a new resource where needed.



## HOW

Jonathan sets the tone by starting with a playful way of organising class introductions. He uses Padlet to “get students to introduce themselves to the rest of the class” and then “normally asks them a couple of questions, including asking them to give one sort of strange fact about themselves” which he feels is “just nice to to get a bit of engagement”.

During the semester, additional online activities are designed in support of the course content and assessments. For Mathematics related questions throughout the semester, Amathuba Discussions are used. There are Mathematical Thinking workshops and online assessments providing feedback. Padlet is used so students can complete regular evaluations and express their sentiments about the course without being judged personally.

As described above, Jonathan uses Padlet to respond to student content-related, practical, technical or administrative queries. Padlet has an alert function so that lecturers are notified when a new question has been posed. By using the notification features, Jonathan was able to respond to questions and provide feedback in a timely manner, ultimately enhancing the learning experience for his students.

The screenshot shows a course management system interface. At the top, there is a dark blue navigation bar with links: Course Home, Content, Activities (with a dropdown arrow), Course Info (with a dropdown arrow), Grades, and Help (with a dropdown arrow). On the left side, there is a sidebar menu with several items: Course Outline and important dates, Academic Integrity, UCT Honour Pledge, Class Introductions (highlighted with a blue border), Checklist for the first few days, Resources available to you, and Additional. vevr useful. The main content area displays a Padlet activity titled 'Class Introductions'. The Padlet board has a dark green background with a leaf pattern. The title 'Class Introductions' is in blue. Below the title, there is a text prompt: 'Let us all know who you are. Double click anywhere on the screen below, or click the green + in the bottom right.' The board contains three posts: 1. 'Hi everyone!' by Jonathan Shock, dated 1mo ago. The text says: 'My name is Jonathan Shock, I'm the course convenor for MAM103X. Two unusual things about me is that I only got a'. 2. 'Join the WhatsApp group <3' by Jonathan Shock, dated 1mo ago. 3. 'Hello everyone!' by Jonathan Shock, dated 1mo ago. The text says: 'I have many interests, and I cannot possibly list them all. I love cats, technology, nature and so much more.'

## LINKS

- **Get help** from [A guide to using Padlet at UCT](#);
- **Learn more** about [Responsive teaching and online engagement design](#) in the [ENABLE framework](#).

[Visit the ENABLE Designing for Blended Learning webpage](#)



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